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Spin doctoring In Andhra Pradesh

Monitoring of two newspapers -- Eenadu and Sakshi -- provides documentation of how single-mindedly the Congress party is using its chief minister's family newspaper to tarnish the TDP's Naidu. C S H N MURTHY details his findings. CSHN Murthy

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***Eenadu and Andhra Jyothi* Strategy**

While performing adversarial journalistic responsibility *Eenadu* has a unique strategy, which even followed by *Andhra Jyothi* and many others

Reduced Focus on Chandrababu in the first page: To gain the public confidence of its adversarial role to the Government, *Eenadu* relegated Chandrababu to inner pages long ago. Except when sensational revelations were made by the leader of TDP, routine write ups/scoops about Chandrababu's meetings or tours started figuring in page 5 or page 8 of *Eenadu.* On the other hand, YSR's routine activities and his photos meetings and statements continued to occupy the first page.

In our sample of 30 days, we found almost all the 30 days YSR's photos meetings and political statements including attacks on Chandrababu appeared on the first page. Not only YSR's statements against Chandrababu appeared but also the statements of his cabinet colleagues criticizing Chandrababu and his previous government's failures get prominence in the lead headlines of first page of *Eenadu.* Where Chandrababu and YSR mutually challenged each other either in the Assembly or outside both of them appeared in the front page in equal division of space. Such an approach is a clever marketing strategy to neutralize the political propaganda against *Eendau* that it is a pro-TDP paper. In fact such propaganda for the last four years by the Congress MLAs, MPs and spin-doctors could not make a dent on the circulation of *Eenadu* or its credibility.

Regular Coverage of Stories on corruption and nepotism in the ongoing projects

At the same time, our analysis of 30 days sample revealed that *Eenadu* regularly published minimum one to maximum three stories involving corrupt deals or orders or activities of YSR's ministers or administrative machinery. These stories largely pertain to fraudulently acquiring assigned lands of the poor farmers and allotting them to business magnets close to YSR under special economic zones (SEZs). Besides issues related to illegal mining, favoritism in granting mining licenses conversion of lands allotted to SEZs to real estate sale of government lands to business houses in the name of generating funds for the on going projects etc figured prominently. Some of the stories, which bear mirror to the government's lapses including unfettered corruption, are enlisted here:

24.03.08 Moodellalo Kharchu Chesindi padi lakshale. Anchana 254.05 kotlu. Punaravaasam pi sircaru teeridi. Gangalo munagadame. Yellampalli nirvasitula vedana.

25.03.08 Ledantoone vaata. Vastuvula pi pannula mota.

27.03.08. Kotta musugulu guttedaarla nayaa veshaalu. Ennikallo poteeki sannahaalu..jalayagyam chalave.

28.03.08 Dagaa Pacchi dagaa. Raashtraprabhutva Vanchanapi pradhaniki ONGC mora. Kumbhakonam needalo vaNukutunna adhikaarulu.

28.03.08 Pongi porlutunna beeru

MEDIA WATCH BRIEF

Worse than rioting

If you are still unclear about the draconian nature of Sec 66 (a) of the IT Act, here's something that'll help: Palghar police charged ten people with rioting, unlawful assembly, endangering life or personal safety of others, mischief and house-trespass (Secs 143, 147, 336, 427, 451 of the Indian Penal Code (IPC) respectively) for vandalizing Dr Dhada's hospital. Punishment for all this: three months to two years. But the young women arrested under section 66 (a), IT Act, and Sec 505 (2) of the IPC for their Facebook posts can get upto three years! Clearly, riotous acts are less dangerous than speaking out!

Contrite Katju

When Press Council Chairman Markendeya Katju questioned the intellectual calibre of media persons, it gave the Indian Newspaper Society (INS) the perfect excuse to boycott his meetings. Oddly, the normally combative Press Council chairman expressed regrets in a letter dated 21.09.2012. Now, the INS has magnanimously accepted the regrets, a press release from the society said. Perhaps Katju will rein in his criticism of media houses now, more the pity!

Usage, please

Ladies and gentlemen of the media please note: laid to rest .. **more>>**

He loved the media?

.. **more>>**

....MORE BRIEFS

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MEDIA JOB OF THE WEEK

New Business Age Pvt. Ltd in Nepal is hiring a Copy Editor

New Business Age Pvt. Ltd., the pioneer of Economic Journalism in Nepal has been publishing New Business Age (monthly business magazine in English), Aarthik Abh

Opening at The Statesman

The Statesman needs correspondents at

28.03.08 Ayinavaarikosam manassumaari penna to kalisinanduku veyyi akarallo ganula manjooruku siddham.

29. 03.08 aduguadugunaa avakatavakale. Moolyam vela kotlu. Ganula ketaimpulo akramaalu, sezlaku bhoopanderamlo ishta raajyam. Adhikaara yantraangamlo nirlakshyam. Avineetipi prabhutva vaadana tappu. CAG report.

29.03.08 Meerante Meere akramaalapi dummettiposukonna YS and Chandrababu.

30.03.08 Aagani dopidi badaa babula jebulloki kotlu-khajaanaaku tootlu.
30.03.08 Toona maaphia

Anti-YSR and Congress coverage in the first page including cartoons.

Almost all the cartoons drawn by famous cartoonist Sridhar regularly run against YSR/his policies/party in the first page. In our sample of analysis, we examined total 45 cartoons (big and small). Of 45, 30 were against YSR/his policies/party; 6 were against TDP, 2 were against Left, none on TRS; 7 were on national issues. Thus, one or two out of ten would go against Chandrababu or other politicians of the state. Some times two cartoons were also published when central congress leadership was also involved or heckled.

Similarly if YSR or his cabinet colleagues encounter a public reaction during a particular meeting or tour a photo involving such a reaction or popular dissent against CM or his colleagues governance was mentioned in the report in detail Even electronic media like *MAA TV, TV9, NTV, TV5, Gemini*, and TEJA covered such incidents in minute detail.

However, the anti YSR articles or anti-congress articles continue to appear inside the Edit pages in the form of Editorials, Edit page articles or middles as a policy of the management. However this is not focus of our study.

Credibility of Eenadu Sustains largely due to its survey reports.

Of all the media stories *Eenadu* publishes, *Eenadu* surveys are of significant value addition to the general reporting. Surveys on prices of foods and vegetables carried out in the month of March are a few examples.

Sakshi s Strategy

More focus on YSR and his schemes.

In our 30 days of sample analysis, we found almost all stories on the first page based on the agencies out put such as PIB/DIPR/Government press releases. This apart the *insiders (spin doctors),* who are close to or privy to YSR (ideas/policies/ statements), write ups/scoops/press meets do appear in the first page. Not a single day goes without publishing a photo of YSR covering a statement/meeting/policy decision. Not a single content analysis or news analysis story would appear even as an anchor item either in the first page or inside pages as in the case of professional papers like *Eenadu* where articles of Neerja Choudhary and Ramachandra Guha appear regularly. Nor does a single item appear criticizing the government s policies/programs/failures. In a sample of 30 days we scrutinized, Chandrababu s photos (5 times) were published only when he was heckled or attacked either by Government or by *Sakshi suo moto.*

No stories on corruption, nepotism and favoritism on the first page.

In steep contrast to *Eenadu s* first page stories on corruption in hiking the budget estimates of several small/large irrigation projects/change of project designs that result in the hike of budgets/benefit the contractors, *Saksh*i did not publish a single story of corruption involved in the million crores projects/leasing of mines, allotment of lands for SEZs, etc. Even at the height of other papers like *Vaartha, Andhra Prabha* reporting huge level of corruption, nepotism and favoritism, *Sakshi* unusually maintains an indifference to these stories.

Derogatory references to Chandrababu and his government s lapses (either suo-moto or by the Congress leaders).

In our 30 days sample, we found not less than 12-15 stories against Chandrababu an importance that no paper/electronic media pays to him. Some of them are:

1.26.03.08 *Oka Mahanaayakudu iddaru maayagaallu* reference was to Chandrababu as a great cheat/fraud.
2. 31.03.08 *Pedalu lokuva, peddalapi makkuva* reference was to again Chandrababu for his wicked designs in using NTR Trust land/NTR cancer hospital space for commercial complexes.
3. 31.03.08 *Nattanadi bazarulo niyamaalalu tilodakalu* reference was to Chandrababu for violating the rules in allotting land to NTR Trust.

Ahmedabad, Jaipur, Raipur and Gangtok to cover the states of Gujarat, Rajasthan, Chhatisgarh and Sikkim respectively. Appl

MORE JOBS

POLL

Is Manish Tewari a good choice for the Information and Broadcasting portfolio?

- **Yes**
- **No**
- **Cannot say**

Vote Result

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4. April 1, 2008 *Trust ke naamam* again a reference to Chandrababu's cheating the Trust.
5. April 3, 2008 *Nindu sabhalo rubabu* reference to Chandrababu's goonda behaviour towards speaker.
6.April 3, 2008 Vipaksha netagaa Viphalam reference to Chandrababu's failure as an Opposition leader-a Statement of YSR in the Assembly on no-confidence motion.
7. April 4, 2008 Bhrashtu pattina Trust reference to Chandrababu having spoilt the noble objectives of NTR Trust.

Like wise it ran a number of stories giving prominence to his revolt against NTR as a backstabber *(Chandrababu vallane maa naanna atmakshobha: Sakshi 14.04.08*). Stories were also published that Chandrababu called up his family cine actors, also children of NTR, for a dinner to counter Congress and Chiranjeevi in the ensuing elections in 2009. (*Sakshi: NTR vaarasulaku babu Vindu 13.04.08).*

On the one hand, YSR and his cabinet colleagues constant refrain is that Chandrababu lost his political credibility and balance of mind. On the other they go on attacking him through *Sakshi* or other forums like press meets. Chief Whip Kiran Kumar Reddy, Party Spokes person Tulasi Reddy, Raghu Veera Reddy, Agriculture Minister, Rosaiah, Finance Minister are a few who constantly attack Chandrababu.

In our sample about 7 stories were published in *Sakshi* against Chandrababu and the NTR trust alone alleging mismanagement and corruption. When Chandrababu offered to place the entire records of NTR trust management and use of funds before speaker or members of Legislative Assembly, the government and *Sakshi* stunningly maintained stoic silence. This is a classic example of spin doctoring managed through media to malign the opponents.

If Chandrababu really lost credibility as an opposition leader, and is no longer a political strategist or a force to reckon with, why is the entire government machinery including *Sakshi* is targeting Chandrababu? That is a billion dollar question. The pattern seems to be very similar to that of Janata Government's fall during 1977-1980. After defeating Indira Gandhi in 1977 elections, the Janata Dal leaders continued to attack Indira day in and day out narrating her emergency excesses. When Janata Dal collapsed under its own weight in 1979, Indira emerged triumphant and ruled the country till she fell to the bullets of assassins on Oct 31, 1984. Presently, the State Congress under the leadership of YSR seems to follow the same foolish policy of framing charges and allegations against Chandrababu, who was already punished for his omissions and commissions in 2004. Will this convince the people of the state on the innocence of Congress and its governance?

Even in respect of cartoons, which appear in the first page, our sample consisted of nearly 30 cartoons. Not a single cartoon was against Congress. Cartoons published were primarily against TDP, Left, TRS and others. Twenty cartoons were published against TDP. Four cartoons were published against Left (CPI, CPM); two were against TRS and four on other issues.

Excessive reference to *Eenadu* and *Andhra Jyothi* by *Sakshi*

As dealt with earlier, never in the history of Andhra Journalism has a paper directly referred to the owner of a competitive/rival media in such brazen terms. Indeed *Eenadu* faced a similar problem in the initial years from *Vaarta* and *Deccan Chronicle*. The reasons for such attacks were different not like present ones the political ideologies or loyalties of the paper, however, being the not the main plank of attack. When Chandrababu raised the funds issue of *Sakshi* in Assembly (April1, 2008), the *Sakshi* owner Y.S.Jagan Mohan did not defend his paper on the genuineness of the funds. On the other, his entire reply (*Sakshi April 4,2007)* was attacking *Eenadu* and *Andhra Jyothi*, who, according to him, indulged in similar violations and frauds yet overlooked by Chandababu and entire opposition for that matter. In our 30 days sample as many as 10-12 stories were published against Ramoji alone and sometimes, these stories attacked Ramoji and Radhakrishna of *Andhra Jyothi* together.

The above analysis thus validates the hypotheses H1 to H4 confirming that *objectivity* as is understood so long in the academic and media circles may not be possible in journalism in Andhra Pradesh.

Conclusions

The above analysis clearly brings out the fact that the journalism in Andhra Pradesh is no longer within the ethics of journalism that academics teach. In Andhra Pradesh also, a situation similar to Tamil Nadu media where the media is divided on the lines of political ideologies and loyalties-is taking shape. Our analysis found that objectivity and fairness of reporting are subject to the principles of spin doctoring as put forward by Eric P Louw. We have not even found the kind of objective editorial writing and biased reporting in *Sakshi,* as observed by Padmaja Shaw in her earlier article, Cheerfully Partisan published on April 9,2008 in the Hoot. (http://www.thehoot.org/web/home/story.php?storyid=3053&pg=1&mod=1&sectionId=2&valid=true) . What is being reported /written today in *Eenadu* and *Sakshi,* is clearly within the definitions and functions of spin doctoring. Whereas *Eenadu*'s spin doctoring is akin to adversarial watchdogism, *Sakshi*'s

spin doctoring is muckraking journalism or yellow journalism with hype, impression management and hype and substance being at the centre. Thus, empiricist view of the facts gradually transform to constructivist views, giving way to spin doctoring.

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